

Minutes
Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee
August 12, 2008

Attendance: Jane Ashby, Peter Illya, Karen Kowles, Andrew Melnechuch, Fran VanTreese, Helene VerEeche, Walter Wolnik, Glen Barrington, Ruth Felberg, Stephanie O'Keefe, Mary Wentworth, Eduardo Suarez, Ruth West

The meeting opened at 8:45 a.m. in the First Floor meeting Room of Town Hall

Glen Barrington distributed ridership statistics. He explained that there appears to be a decrease in ridership on the Gatehouse Road route, but this is due to an error in the way the ridership on this route was calculated. He believes ridership during the period increased, but can't document by how much. Since December '07, the statistics for the Route 32 are based on actual counts and are correct.

Mary Wentworth and Eduardo Suarez presented the Commons Group's proposal to reduce Town speed limits to 25 miles an hour. Mary explained that this proposal is not just an Amherst idea. Rhode Island has a speed limit of 25 mph in business and residential areas; six Rochester, NY have petitioned to reduce their speed limits from 30 mph to 25 mph and there is a petition before the Massachusetts legislature to allow the speed limits to be reduced in thickly settled areas. She said the time is right now to address the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians when we are also concerned with carbon and alternative transportation options.

Ruth West, who had worked to get the speed limit on West Pomeroy Laned reduced, said that 25 mph makes it safer for everyone. She said the impact is 4 times if one is hit at 50 mph than at 45 mph.

Peter Illya pointed out that the goal was to reduce the differential speed between bikes and cars. He said he was concerned about compliance and asked if the group had looked at other options such as public education.

Eduardo Suarez replied that they are working on education.

Fran VanTreese asked what the Police Department response had been to the proposal.

Mary responded that the Police Chief is not opposed to it, but they don't generally enforce existing speed limits. Mass Highway sets the speed limits and a proposal to reduce the speed limits would have to go through the State.

The discussion was tabled until the next meeting on September 16th due to limited time at this meeting.

Peter summarized the Routes Subcommittee meeting about the budget reduction in the Route 32 budget. He reported the Subcommittee had discussed chopping off pieces of the route, but had decided to leave it as is to have continuity of service. The

Subcommittee focused on considering how to raise revenues by proposals such as increasing parking fines.

Fran reported that she had talked to Peg Roberts about raising fines. Peg was concerned that raising parking fines could have an adverse impact on downtown business. Peg suggested charging fares on busses. She also suggested the PTBC meet with the Parking Task Force.

Jane Ashby said that it was impossible to collect fares because there are no fare boxes on the busses. Glenn added that drivers have to be bonded to collect fare, and in Massachusetts that requires them to be 21 years old. Most UMass Transit drivers are under 21, and so are not eligible to be bonded as required by state law.

Jane talked about the budget shortfalls and Town Meeting. The \$20,000 in decreased revenues is a FY2008 issue and the bus system operating increase is a FY2009 issue. She said in the past, there was a timing problem between when the budget was approved and when UMass knew the true cost of the service. She said that this timing issue is being addressed with the hope that an alignment between the contract and the budget estimate will occur in future years.

Andrew Melnechuk pointed out that the last time there was an increase in parking fines, the revenue decreased.

Jane said the PTBC should meet with the Parking Task Force.

Andrew asked why can't we take the shortfall from the Enterprise Fund surplus. Walter Wolnik commented that that could be controversial because it's an operating problem. Jane commented that surpluses were for unexpected needs.

Peter moved: "Given the increase in ridership in the last year, the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee recommends that the unanticipated fuel cost increase (approximately \$26,000) in the budget for the outreach routes be taken from surplus in the Transportation Enterprise Fund. This amount is less than 10% of the surplus. This move will allow us to come up with revenue generating solutions for this and future years in cooperation with the Parking Task Force and others."

Fran seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting moved to a discussion of Strategy for the following year. The following projects were listed:

- Bike racks at bus stops
- Develop strategy to fund outreach routes in keeping with downtown development
- Park and Ride

- Ride sharing / RideBuzz
- CPA funds for bike trails
- Transportation goals and objectives for Transportation Enterprise Fund. Change pie chart in TEF
- Become familiar with Public Transportation Finances
- Clarify and simplify presentation of the budget of the TEF and Public Transportation Finances
- Improve and expend bike lanes (maintenance of lines and extend lanes)
- Increase bike racks on busses
- Review of all paving projects
- Other forms of alternative transportation (zip cars, auto rickshaws, etc.)

Fran moved to appoint Andrew as liaison to the Public works Committee. Jane seconded. Andrew abstained and all others voted in favor.

Walter said Keene has a bicycle/pedestrian masterplan. He suggested the committee might want to consider looking at it. He also said the state has sustainable development principles regarding transportation choice.

Jane asked if we could discuss these at the September meeting.

Stephanie O'Keefe said the Public Works Committee wants an inventory of bike racks at Public facilities. Jane said this was beyond the scope of a citizen, volunteer committee like the PTBC and asked if we couldn't use CPA funds to hire a consultant.

There was a discussion of putting the individual strategy items into more general categories of Budget, Bikes, Busses, and Cars.

After some discussion it was agreed that the committee would organize and prioritize the action items at the next meeting.

The next meeting will be September 16th at 8:45 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran VanTreese